

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7th, 2022

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Subcommittee on
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife

Re: Opposition to MINKS language in the House COMPETES Act

Dear Colleagues:

We write today to express our opposition to language included in the House COMPETES Act to ban the farming and trade in American mink.

Our states are home to the multi-generational family farms whose livelihoods, farms and communities would be destroyed by this provision.

The “MINKS” amendment, found as Sec. 71104 of the House bill, amends the Lacey Act to prohibit purchase, sale, or transport of farmed mink. The provision was made in order as part of an en bloc amendment in the House – with no hearings or input from the American farmers, retailers, designers or manufacturers whose livelihoods are impacted. In addition to bypassing regular order, the bill misuses the Lacey Act, a statute intended to protect the U.S. from the importation of invasive or injurious species, not to create an unprecedented ban on animal agriculture.

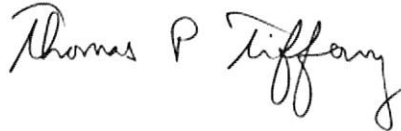
Amendment proponents reference concerns about Covid on farms as the basis for the ban on farming and trade. According to the Fur Commission of the United States (FCUSA), however, while Covid has been detected on farms, an emergency vaccine was developed and deployed and has been in use since early 2021. Since that time, there have been no clinical outbreaks on U.S. mink farms and instances of transmission to humans from minks has been limited to a very few isolated instances and pose no realistic threat to human or animal populations. In fact, the vaccination rate on farm is much higher than that within the general population.

Furthermore, Covid is not unique to mink. Covid is found in feral cats, ferrets, whitetail deer and several species of zoo animals. In none of these circumstances is the public considered “at risk” to transmission. The concern is even less on private farms which are not open to the public and where biosecurity measures are in place. As the National Park Service recently stated: *the risk of getting Covid-19 from animals in the United States, including wildlife, is low. (NPS Statement: Mar 2022)*

Finally, American mink, which are highly prized on the world market, are a net export to China, making this issue completely incompatible with a bill intended to strengthen our trade and competitive stance with China.

This language is a disservice to rural America, animal agriculture and family farms and we respectfully ask you to oppose any effort to include this provision in the final Senate-House version of the China competition bill.

Sincerely,



Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Chris Stewart
Member of Congress



Bryan Steil
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress



Scott Fitzgerald
Member of Congress



Mike Simpson
Member of Congress



Blake Moore
Member of Congress



Burgess Owens
Member of Congress



Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fred Keller". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Fred" and last name "Keller" clearly distinguishable.

Fred Keller
Member of Congress